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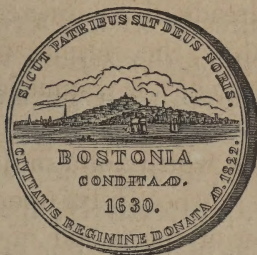
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City Document.—No. 79.

CITY OF BOSTON.



REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LIBRARY.

In Common Council, January 1, 1852.

Read, ordered to be printed, and sent up.

FRANCIS BRINLEY, *President.*

In Board of Mayor and Aldermen, Jan. 3, 1852.

Concurred.

JOHN P. BIGELOW, *Mayor.*

The Joint Standing Committee on the Public Library, in making their Report to the City Council, beg leave to call attention to the language of the Mayor at the beginning of the present year :

“ Considerable progress has been made within the year (1850) towards forming a Free City Library. Donations of funds and books have been received, to an extent which has already secured a respectable foundation for an institution, the serious want of which is generally acknowledged. I commend the subject to your favorable consideration, and trust that an appropriation will be made, worthy of a project which has an auspicious bearing, prospectively, upon the moral and intellectual character of the people of Boston. As the result of such an example on your part, I anticipate many and valuable contributions for the purpose in view, at the hands of public spirited citizens.”

This anticipation has been fully realized: contributions of books have been made by Hon. R. C. Winthrop, J. D. W. Williams, Esq., Dr. J. B. McMahan, Hon. S. A. Eliot, Dr. J. Mason Warren, and E. Weston, Esq., in addition to those received from the city of Paris through A. Vattermare, Esq., and the valuable collection of Hon. Edward Everett; this last, numbering about one thousand volumes, was made the subject of a communication to the City Council under date of June 19, 1851; the collection consists chiefly of Congressional Documents, and State Papers, containing every thing of importance in our national history from the foundation of the Government to the present time.

The appeal to the Council was responded to in the

appropriation of one thousand dollars, which sum has recently been expended under the direction of the Committee.

During the present month, by a formal vote of the Committee, the Mayor was requested to make an appeal to the citizens of Boston in behalf of the Library, and, as the result, though but a few days have elapsed, several valuable contributions of books have been made.

The Library now numbers scarcely less than four thousand volumes.

Beside, the present Mayor, as appears by the record, under date of August 5, 1850, made a donation of one thousand dollars to the Library; this sum is now in the hands of the Treasurer, subject to the disposal of the City Government.

We have then the nucleus of a useful institution already in our hands, and one too which will help make our system of Public Education complete.

It is believed that the City of Boston expends a larger sum, annually, for the education of her children, in proportion to the number of inhabitants, than any other city in the world; and it is well to remember that this outlay is made from mere motives of public policy; we educate, to restrain from vice, as much as to inculcate sentiments of virtue; we educate, to enable man to resist the temptations to evil, as well as to encourage and strengthen the incentives to good.

While we provide for the elementary education of our youth, and thereby awaken the desire for greater acquisition, shall we not furnish the requisite means?

Shall we carry our system of education to a certain point, and withhold our support at the very time, when, if afforded, it would prove most serviceable?

In the Census Report of last year, facts were presented which clearly demonstrate that the ratio of increase is greater among the foreign than the native population, and that the time is not far distant, when, with the tide of immigration also setting in upon us, the preponderance in our City at least will be largely in their favor.

Immigrants for the most part are devoted to the laborious occupations of life; and, if it be true that they know nothing of the enervating influence of luxurious habits, it is also true that they think little of moral and intellectual culture.

Where is the remedy for this influx of ignorance in our native population?—the philanthropist tells us, in Education; and the founders of our Republic have left on record their testimony that the perpetuity of our institutions depends upon the intelligence of the people.

We are a reading community: with courses of well endowed public lectures, with the daily issues of a well conducted religious and secular press, what rational man can doubt the utility of establishing a Library of easy access to all classes of our people?

The Committee are decidedly of opinion that such an institution must be considered an important branch of Popular Education, and as such they commend it to the fostering care of the City Council.

The question of an outlay for the erection of a suitable Library Building, may well be left to the future, in the full assurance that if the Public Library is recognized as a public benefit, this matter will take care of itself.

For the Committee.

ANDREW J. LOUD.

